

'Building On Progress: An Inclusive Ireland.'

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ Policy Document 2023

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Foreword



Fine Gael LGBTQ+ was created in 2015, around the marriage equality referendum to campaign for equal rights under the law for LGBTQ+ people in Ireland. Since then, the organisation has campaigned for policy advancements that effect the diverse range of needs for the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland. Fine Gael have a strong record of progress during the Party's time in Government, Ireland has seen significant advancements to the lives of LGBTQ+ people in all parts of the country. However, more work remains to be done.

Beginning in October 2022, Fine Gael LGBTQ+ began a range of stakeholder meetings with the aim of identifying key policy areas that can be improved. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ met with the following organisations: Shoutout, Outhouse, Belong To, HIV Ireland/MPOWER & LGBT Ireland.

As result of these meetings, and our own internal consultations, we have developed this policy document which contains 56 recommendations that we believe will improve the lives of LGTBQ+ people living in Ireland and build on the hard-won progress Fine Gael has achieved in recent years.

Jacob Whelan

Chairperson, Fine Gael LGBTQ+

Health

Our health services have implemented important changes in recent years that have a direct impact on the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland. However, there remain barriers to access to services and support for the wide range of needs within the LGBTQ+ population.

Many vulnerable groups within the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland have a strained relationship with the health services. This is due to a myriad of reasons but include cost barriers and privacy concerns; this is particularly true of young LGBTQ+ citizens and members of the LGBTQ+ migrant community.

Covid-19 had a significant impact on the number of STI and STD tests being carried out across the country. This has resulted in missed diagnoses and rise in a number of STIs and STDs within the State.

Eradicating New HIV Transmissions in Ireland

We have made good progress in recent years in efforts to stop the spread of HIV in Ireland. Government aims of eradicating new HIV transmissions in Ireland by 2030 are achievable with the proper resourcing.

While the number of people with HIV in Ireland, rose in 2022, this has in the most, been driven by new arrivals in Ireland, notifying the HSE as to their status and thus switching their treatment from abroad to

the HSE. The number of new transmissions of HIV in Ireland were down in 2022.

Through the use of new medications, increased resourcing for STI/STD clinics, and increased home testing, we can achieve the goal of eliminating new transmissions of HIV in Ireland by 2030.

Research carried out by Dr. Elena Vaughan, NUIG, found that "among healthcare workers who were not HIV specialists, 83% claimed knowledge of 'Undetectable = Untransmittable' (U=U) and treatment as prevention. However, 40% said they would still be nervous about drawing blood from a person living with HIV leading to unnecessary 'extra' precautions, e.g., excessive use of PPE."

Underdiagnosis of HIV remains a challenge within the European Union and European Economic Area (1). The WHO-Europe, in conjunction with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control estimate that 1 in 8 HIV positive people in the EU/EAA remain undiagnosed. This presents a problem for Ireland and the wider European community in efforts to meet our 2030 targets.

The National Sexual Health Strategy 2015 – 2020, which was extended until the end of 2022 due to the impacts of Covid-19, underpins the delivery of sexual health services in Ireland. It is important that a new, updated, National Sexual Health Strategy is published without undue delay.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the Government to redouble efforts to eradicate new transmissions of HIV in Ireland by 2030.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for adequate resourcing for peer support networks for those living with HIV in Ireland.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increased training for non-HIV specialist healthcare workers with regard to HIV patients.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for building on the success of the 'Undetectable = Untransmittable' (U=U) campaign, and to renew efforts to tackle HIV related stigma in Ireland.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increased efforts to provide a linkage of care between the HSE and other European Union health services.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the publication of a new National Sexual Health Strategy as a matter of priority.

Access to PrEP

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a crucial drug in the fight against the spread of HIV in Ireland. PrEP significantly reduces the risk of contracting HIV through sexual intercourse and to date there has been a high degree of interest among the LGBTQ+ community in accessing this drug.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ have previously campaigned for the inclusion of PrEP under the HSE and were pleased to see this milestone reached in 2019.

Access to PrEP, however, remains difficult, with long waiting lists and regional imbalance. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ supports all efforts to address the demand for PrEP services in Ireland. Other jurisdictions that have experienced long waiting lists for access to PrEP have seen a drop off in demand for the drug, as prospective users become frustrated with delays. This is a direct threat to meeting our 2030 goal to end new transmissions of HIV.

Currently, there are 13 public clinics in Ireland that can provide PrEP to individuals, 4 of these clinics are located in Dublin. There are also 16 private/GP

providers who are approved to prescribe PrEP, 15 of which are located in Dublin.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a reduction in the waiting times to access PrEP and for adequate resourcing of sexual health clinics catering to the LGBTQ+ community.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increased provision of PrEP services outside of Dublin and to achieve a geographical balance to access PrEP, which in turn will reduce pressures on current services and reduce waiting lists.

Access to PEP

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis is a key tool in the fight to stop the transmission of HIV in Ireland. This drug must be taken within 72 hours of being exposed to HIV.

Given the peak social hours, much of the demand for PEP will occur over weekends. However, currently no STI clinics are open on weekends, public holidays or outside of business hours during the working week. No GP or pharmacist can provide PEP. Access to PEP outside of STI clinics, is only available through Emergency Departments, which incurs a €100 fee (for EU citizens), in the absence of a GP referral.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the delivery of weekend emergency sexual health clinics to protect vulnerable people.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the introduction of weekend access to PEP through sexual health clinics.

Home Testing

Home testing can play a significant role in identifying STIs and STDs in Ireland. The LGBTQ+ community have had notable engagement with vaccine programmes and sexual health awareness campaigns (2).

Home testing pilots have seen an overwhelming demand, and Fine Gael LGBTQ+ support the resourcing of these services that will enable more people to access these testing kits.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a scaling up of availability and resourcing for home STI and STD testing kits.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a public awareness campaign to be introduced in conjunction with service providers with regard to STIs and STDs.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a review of continuity mechanisms for STI and STD testing, in the event of future disruption to national health services, like those experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Blood Donations

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ welcomes the decision made by the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS), last year, to remove some of the barriers to blood donation in Ireland. Previous restrictions on blood donation in Ireland have directly impacted the LGBTQ+ population in Ireland. Under these new rules to blood donation, the IBTS will base blood donation on an individual's sexual history, while maintaining the integrity of the blood supply.

Despite these positive changes, some barriers remain. These include a permanent ban on blood donations for anyone who has ever contracted gonorrhoea and a ban on anyone living with a HIV positive partner.

Gonorrhoea is a virus that can be suppressed through treatment and thus become untransmittable; other jurisdictions, such as the UK, have implemented a deferral period for people who have received treatment of gonorrhoea, rather than a permanent ban.

Similarly, those living with a HIV partner who is receiving treatment and has suppressed the virus, are given a permanent ban from donating blood under current IBTS guidelines. If a HIV patient has virally suppressed the virus, they cannot pass it to their partner through sexual intercourse, however this ban penalises those partners.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a review of the scientific evidence for a permanent ban on blood donations for individuals who have virally suppressed gonorrhoea.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a review of the scientific evidence for a permanent ban on blood donations for partners of individuals who have virally suppressed HIV.

Transgender Healthcare

While there has been a lot of progress in recent years, there is still significant progress to be made in relation to an all-encompassing model of care for transgender persons.

In 2022, Ireland was ranked bottom of the EU27 for transgender healthcare by Transgender Europe (TGEU) (3). This ranking was formed by the following factors:

- Type of trans healthcare and coverage available in the country;
- Requirement for a psychiatric diagnosis before hormonal treatment or surgery;
- Waiting time for first appointment with a trans healthcare professional;
- Groups excluded or made to wait longer to access trans-specific healthcare;
- Youngest age for puberty blockers;
- Youngest age for hormones.

Most concerning is the estimated waiting times of 2.5 years to 10 years* from the point of requesting to see a specialist to seeing a specialist. Most other EU Member States complete this process in under 1 year.

At an Oireachtas briefing on this issue, it was reported by National Gender Service representatives that referrals are seeing a strong and consistent rise in referrals.

This situation has been compounded by disruption with regard to Irish patients accessing the United Kingdom's Tavistock clinic.

*The higher end of this scale has been contested.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a patient centred approach for transgender healthcare, where the patient's voice is integral.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for concerted efforts to made to address the significant waiting lists associated with transgender healthcare and for the appropriate data collection to be introduced to aid that effort.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a model of care to be developed for adolescent transgender patients, based on international best practices.

Justice

2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ supports the work of the Government in introducing new hate crime legislation; the work of the Minister to deliver a disregard scheme for historical convictions; and increases in resourcing for An Garda Síochána.

Recent Garda statistics show that sexual orientation was a motivating factor in over 15% of all hate crimes and hate related incidents (as of July 2022) in Ireland (4). This was the first full year of data collection since important changes to Garda data recording methods.

With high-profile attacks on members of the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland, in recent years, there is a rising concern within the community that their sexual orientation will result in their being targeted by acts of aggression. Government, in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, must continue to engage with the LGBTQ+ community to build confidence in safety and reporting mechanisms.

Anti-hate Taskforce

To tackle the rise of extremist views and narratives targeting race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and more, Fine Gael LGBTQ+ believe that the development of a Taskforce to Tackle Hate, to be led by the Minister for Justice, will benefit all minorities in Ireland.

Such a taskforce will complement the important

changes recently brought forward by the Minister, in Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of a multidisciplinary Taskforce to tackle hate-related incidents in Ireland.

Public Education Campaign on Hate Crime.

Following the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022, we believe that a public awareness campaign detailing what meets the definition of a Hate Crime, is necessary, both within minority communities and the wider public. Previous public education campaigns have proven successful across a wide range of policy areas, including vaccinations and the 'Zero Tolerance' awareness campaigns.

The development of a public awareness campaign for hate crimes and hate incidents can boost faith in minority groups that their reports will be treated seriously and also enable allies to identify wrongdoing more readily and support vulnerable people.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of a public awareness campaign relating to hate crime and hate related incidents.

Building Trust in Reporting Systems.

Due to the complex history between the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland and State Agencies, efforts must be made to build trust within in the community when engaging with authorities.

As with other minorities, the reporting of hate crimes and hate related incidents among the LGBTQ+ community is likely subject to underreporting.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a renewed effort to engage with minority communities and service providers to encourage reporting of crimes.

Garda Sensitivity Training.

As a minority population, the LGBTQ+ community, has at times in the history of the State, had a strained relationship with Gardai. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ welcomes the efforts of An Garda Síochána to increase the level of sensitivity training among members of the Gardai, and the appointment of dedicated LGBTQ+ Garda liaisons. These efforts should be enhanced and supported.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for engagement with An Garda Síochána with regard to increasing the number of Gardai completing LGBTQ+ awareness training.

Tackling Extremism

Ireland is currently seeing a rise in extreme groups targeting a number of minority groups, most notably the migrant and the transgender communities respectively, however, we have also seen a rise in activity involving racism, homophobia and religious discrimination.

Far right groups have also been driven in recent times by international events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, specifically through misinformation campaigns.

Misinformation and disinformation pose a significant threat to the stability and progress of diversity in Ireland. These methods also offer a direct threat to public

trust in our institutions and our democratic processes. Extreme groups use these methods in an attempt to create 'culture wars', to sow division in our communities.

A recent study produced at Maynooth University (5), asked workers and volunteers of Civil Society Organisations about their experiences in dealing with elements of the far right. The results show:

- 67% of respondent organisations said staff or clients had experienced threats or violence from the far right.
- 100% of respondent organisations reported online harassment.
- 75% of respondent organisations reported verbal threats and harassment.
- 50% of respondent organisations reported physical harassment or threats.
- 80% reported a rise in such incidents over the past 5 years.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for regular engagement with social media platforms to monitor and tackle hate.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for an all-island dialogue on homophobic and transphobic hate.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a media literacy campaign to educate the public on misinformation and disinformation.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for co-ordination between State agencies and Civil Society Organisations to develop anti-far-right strategies.

Education

The education sector has seen advancements in LGBTQ+ inclusion policies in recent years, but more work remains to be done. Negative associations with education settings, particularly among secondary school students, remains an issue that negatively impacts on students' wellbeing and educational outcomes. At third level, we should consider the different ways in which LGBTQ+ people can progress their education through new initiatives.

Developing Youth LGBTQ+ Leadership Programmes/Qualifications

As we begin to diversify the processes in how people access higher and further education, new programmes and qualifications should be considered as a route of education.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for building on the success of youth leadership programmes and for the development of youth leadership programmes specific to the LGBTQ+ community.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the consideration of the development of accompanying qualifications through leadership programmes in higher and further education institutions, for participating students.

Creating Safer Schools.

Despite improvements in LGBTQ+ awareness within the education system, recent studies show that school environments can still be hostile to young LGBTQ+ peoples. This includes the use of homophobic, transphobic and other derogatory language; bullying; and safety concerns.

Research conducted by BeLong To (6) shows:

- 76 per cent of LGBTQ+ students feel unsafe at school.
- 69 per cent of LGBTQ+ students hear homophobic remarks from other students.
- 58 per cent of LGBTQ+ students heard homophobic remarks from school staff.

Moreover, the report shows that 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ students have skipped school due to their concerns over attitudes towards their LGBTQ+ status. This has a negative effect on the quality of their mental health and their education.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increasing LGBTQ+ awareness in teacher training and qualifications which will facilitate safer schools for LGBTQ+ students.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for school Principals and Boards of Management taking part in similar LGBTQ+ awareness training.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of peer support groups in schools for LGBTQ+ students.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for strengthening of the National Action Plan on Bullying and recent reviews of the SPHE curriculum, to facilitate an inclusive LGBTQ+ school environment.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for LGBTQ+ practices within schools to form part of school inspection processes.

3rd Level Access to Sexual Health Clinics

Several 3rd level institutions within the State provide for sexual health services on campuses, with a varying range of services and costs. These services should be built upon and enhanced where existing services are provided and introduced to 3rd level institutions that are yet to develop them. Providing access for students to sexual health clinics on campus can result in timely intervention on STIs and STDs, and importantly, play a key role in the prevention of the spread of STIs and STDs.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for an increase in the number of 3rd level educational institutions that provide services through sexual health clinics.

Equality

LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers

International protection applicants who are members of the LGBTQ+ community can face a number of barriers when seeking refuge in Ireland. It is almost impossible to produce documentary evidence for one's sexual orientation and gender identity. This can be compounded through a range of complicating factors in an interview setting, including shame, internalised homophobia, mistrust of State authorities and more.

Many asylum seekers that are members of the LGBTQ+ community, have suffered from various forms of discrimination in the past. If they are approved for asylum in Ireland, they can encounter some of the same cultural discrimination that they have fled. It is therefore important to build inclusive systems and facilities that protect the individual's right to freely express their identity, this however can be curtailed due to fear and intimidation of those around them (7).

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for adequate information on Irish LGBTQ+ services to be provided to international protection applicants at the first point of contact.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for training for interviewers on LGBTQ+ issues, as well as the cultural challenges applicants may have encountered in their respective nations.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the introduction of dedicated training for staff at Direct Provision centres to help accommodate members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a feasibility examination for providing secure accommodation for vulnerable LGBTQ+ asylum seekers within accommodation settings.

Conversion Therapy

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ welcome the significant progress being made to deliver legislation banning Conversion Therapy in Ireland. While this practice is rare in Ireland, there are cases in which it has been carried out. Conversion Therapy can take advantage of an individual's insecurities, vulnerability and fear; moreover, it can have a serious financial impact on those receiving such services. The practice of Conversion Therapy, which has no root in scientific basis, and is banned in a number of EU States, should be banned in Ireland through legislation, as a matter of priority. This practice can be particularly insidious when used against LGBTQ+ people under the age of 18, which can often be against their own personal wishes.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a complete ban on Conversion Therapy in Ireland, regardless of age.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a ban on the promotion of Conversion Therapy services in all its forms, online

and in traditional media.

Surrogacy Rights

Surrogacy is a viable option for many heterosexual and homosexual couples in Ireland.

Issues surrounding surrogacy for same-sex couples can present significant barriers for both the child and same-sex parents. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ supports the work of the Special Joint Oireachtas Committee on International Surrogacy and the report published by this Committee in July 2022 (8).

Currently, two females in a same-sex couple who have a child through surrogacy, do not have parental rights to their child. Similarly, for male same-sex couples, where one father is the donor, the partner is not recognised as the child's father.

These types of situations present significant challenges to same-sex parents and the child, whereby one or potentially neither parent have the

same rights of heterosexual couples who have not engaged in surrogacy. This means that one or both parents cannot carry out important parental duties.

In December 2022, Cabinet approved to policy and legislative proposals to surrogacy on both a national, and international basis. This will include the development of an Assisted Human Reproduction Authority (AHRRA), an important step in providing support and clarity to families across Ireland.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for legislative changes to the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Bill 2022 Bill to be progressed as matter of priority.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for same-sex parents of children born through surrogacy to be equally recognised as parents.

Sport

Sport is a cornerstone of Irish life, most children will play a sport while growing up and continue an interest in sport into the future. Sport also plays a significant role in our cultural engagements, with a wide range of sports events taking place throughout each year.

In 2022, several high-profile Irish sports stars came out as members of the LGBTQ+ community. This is a positive development that sends a strong message to young LGBTQ+ people in Ireland. Representation has a profound effect on continued engagement with a particular sport and encourages other players to express their identity. However, other negative developments have also occurred, notably, the decision of the IRFU to ban transgender women from competing in full-contact rugby matches.

LGBTQ+ Participation in Irish Sport

Many sports clubs have positive processes for LGBTQ+ inclusion and supporting players who come out. However, this can vary to extremes based on an individual club's approach.

In May 2022, Sport Ireland published their report on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport (9). It identifies barriers to LGBTQ+ participants that include:

- "Anxiety or fear of experiencing homophobia, prejudice, discrimination, bullying and exclusion."
- "Attitudinal barriers, not feeling welcome or included within sport and physical activity settings."
- "Lack of representation and of sport and physical activity role models."

The Irish Sports Monitor 2021 Report (10) highlights that only 34% of club members said that their club tries to reach out to minority communities.

While LGBTQ+ individuals are as likely to participate

in sports (41%) as heterosexuals (41%), LGBTQ+ people are less likely to be a member of a club (21%) as opposed to heterosexuals (32%).

The report also shows that 56% of club members are not aware of another member or volunteer of their club who is part of the LGBTQ+ community.

The Irish Sports Monitor 2021, shows that most people believe their clubs to be open, welcoming places for minority groups, however, from the data detailed in the report, it is clear that this is primarily driven by a member of a minority group being a member or volunteer of the club itself, rather than defined inclusion policies and outreach initiatives etc.

Sport not only has mental and physical health benefits, but participation in clubs also has a positive effect of society, creating more invested citizens and building stronger communities as a result.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls on Sport Ireland to develop a clear and standardised policies for sports clubs to support diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of a 'Champions of Change' programmes for sports clubs that promote diversity and inclusion.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls on Sport Ireland, National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships to increase the number of minority representatives involved in their leadership teams.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for greater engagement between Sports Ireland and LGBTQ+ service providers when developing inclusion initiatives.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls on all governing bodies of sport to develop transgender inclusion policies.

Foreign Affairs

LGBTQ+ Rights Internationally

Full marriage equality for LGBTQ+ people is only legal in 32 countries around the world (11). Some prominent EU member States are among those yet to introduce marriage equality in their respective countries.

This is less than half the number of countries that still criminalise homosexuality, 67 (almost half of these countries are commonwealth States).

Of the 67 countries that criminalise homosexuality; 14 have specific criminalisation of transgender peoples; 11 countries have the ability to impose the death penalty for persons convicted of offenses relating to homosexuality, of these 11 countries, several employ the death penalty, they are (12):

Iran, (Northern) Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen.

The death penalty is an option in:

Afghanistan, Brunei, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar and UAE.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for LGBTQ+ rights to be raised in future international engagements with nations that criminalise homosexuality.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the Government to use its position in the European Union and the United Nations to champion LGBTQ+ rights internationally.

Sports Washing

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar shone a light on the use of what is generally referred to as 'sports-washing', the practice of using international sporting events to restore reputational damage incurred in other areas. This was particularly true of Qatar, that maintain a range of anti-LGBTQ+ laws, including imprisonment.

Saudi Arabia have recently launched a joint bid to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup, along with Egypt and Greece. Saudi Arabia has some of the harshest laws against homosexuality in the world, where those convicted of homosexual acts can face life in prison or even the death penalty. Such Governments should not profit from the hosting of an international sporting events, where LGBTQ+ fans and players are restricted in expressing themselves and where LGBTQ+ citizens are persecuted.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for opposition to any international sporting event being awarded to a nation that has been documented to be pursuing human rights abuses.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the Government to work with our international partners to end the practise of sports-washi

Housing & Local Government

LGBTQ+ Homelessness

There is little consensus on the number of LGBTQ+ people that are experiencing homelessness, this is primarily driven by a lack of data. However, we do know that young LGBTQ+ individuals are at a higher risk of homelessness when they come out or begin transitioning (13).

Youth LGBTQ+ homelessness has unique triggering events which can be distinct from the general population, this therefore requires unique responses from housing services.

Currently, there are no LGBTQ+ dedicated homeless shelters in Ireland. Introducing such a service can provide a space for LGBTQ+ people facing homelessness to go and receive help from staff trained with respect of the issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of dedicated LGBTQ+ homeless accommodation.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of new data collection processes related to homeless services and the LGBTQ+ community.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for training for staff of homelessness services with respect to LGBTQ+ persons.

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the introduction of privacy and safety strategies for LGBTQ+ persons accessing homelessness services.

Census Data

Currently, and as with many official forms, the census contains only two options for gender identity, male or female. During Census 2022, there was no option for transgender, intersex or non-binary persons to identify as such. This therefore discounts the experience of many of our people and leads to a missed opportunity to collect valuable data that can inform the delivery of services.

Recommendations:

Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for changes to be made to all future censuses to include options for transgender, intersex or non-binary identifications.

Recommendations

Health

1. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the Government to redouble efforts to eradicate new transmissions of HIV in Ireland by 2030.
2. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for adequate resourcing for peer support networks for those living with HIV in Ireland.
3. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increased training for non-HIV specialist healthcare workers with regard to HIV patients.
4. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for building on the success of the 'Undetectable = Untransmittable' (U=U) campaign, and to renew efforts to tackle HIV related stigma in Ireland.
5. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increased efforts to provide a linkage of care between the HSE and other European Union health services.
6. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the publication of a new National Sexual Health Strategy as a matter of priority.
7. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a reduction in the waiting times to access PrEP and for adequate resourcing of sexual health clinics catering to the LGBTQ+ community.
8. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increased provision of PrEP services outside of Dublin and to achieve a geographical balance to access PrEP, which in turn will reduce pressures on current services and reduce waiting lists.
9. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the delivery of weekend emergency sexual health clinics to protect vulnerable people.
10. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the introduction of weekend access to PEP through sexual health clinics.
11. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a scaling up of availability and resourcing for home STI and STD testing kits.
12. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a public awareness campaign to be introduced in conjunction with service providers with regard to STIs and STDs.
13. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a review of continuity mechanisms for STI and STD testing, in the event of future disruption to national health services, like those experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.
14. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a review of the scientific evidence for a permanent ban on blood donations for individuals who have virally suppressed gonorrhoea.
15. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a review of the

scientific evidence for a permanent ban on blood donations for partners of individuals who have virally suppressed HIV.

16. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a patient centred approach for transgender healthcare, where the patient's voice is integral.
17. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for concerted efforts to made to address the significant waiting lists associated with transgender healthcare and for the appropriate data collection to be introduced to aid that effort.
18. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a model of care to be developed for adolescent transgender patients, based on international best practices.

Justice

19. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of a multidisciplinary Taskforce to tackle hate-related incidents in Ireland.
20. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of a public awareness campaign relating to hate crime and hate related incidents.
21. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a renewed effort to engage with minority communities and service providers to encourage reporting of crimes.
22. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for engagement with An Garda Síochána with regard to increasing the number of Gardai completing LGBTQ+ awareness training.
23. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for regular engagement with social media platforms to monitor and tackle hate.
24. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for an all-island dialogue on homophobic and transphobic hate.
25. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a media literacy campaign to educate the public on misinformation and disinformation.
26. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for co-ordination between State agencies and Civil Society Organisations to develop anti-far-right strategies.

Education

27. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for building on the success of youth leadership programmes and for the development of youth leadership programmes specific to the LGBTQ+ community.

28. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the consideration of the development of accompanying qualifications through leadership programmes in higher and further education institutions, for participating students.
29. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for increasing LGBTQ+ awareness in teacher training and qualifications which will facilitate safer schools for LGBTQ+ students.
30. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for school Principals and Boards of Management taking part in similar LGBTQ+ awareness training.
31. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of peer support groups in schools for LGBTQ+ students.
32. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for strengthening of the National Action Plan on Bullying and recent reviews of the SPHE curriculum, to facilitate an inclusive LGBTQ+ school environment.
33. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for LGBTQ+ practices within schools to form part of school inspection processes.
34. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for an increase in the number of 3rd level educational institutions that provide services through sexual health clinics.

Equality

35. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for adequate information on Irish LGBTQ+ services to be provided to international protection applicants at the first point of contact.
36. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for training for interviewers on LGBTQ+ issues, as well as the cultural challenges applicants may have encountered in their respective nations.
37. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the introduction of dedicated training for staff at Direct Provision centres to help accommodate members of the LGBTQ+ community.
38. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a feasibility examination for providing secure accommodation for vulnerable LGBTQ+ asylum seekers within accommodation settings.
39. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a complete ban on Conversion Therapy in Ireland, regardless of age.
40. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for a ban on the promotion of Conversion Therapy services in all its forms, online and in traditional media.
41. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for legislative changes to the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Bill 2022 Bill to be progressed as matter of priority.
42. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for same-sex parents of children born through surrogacy to be equally recognised as parents.

Sport

43. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls on Sport Ireland to develop a clear and standardised policies for sports clubs to support diversity and inclusion initiatives.
44. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of a 'Champions of Change' programmes for sports clubs that promote diversity and inclusion.
45. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls on Sport Ireland, National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships to increase the number of minority representatives involved in their leadership teams.
46. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for greater engagement between Sports Ireland and LGBTQ+ service providers when developing inclusion initiatives.
47. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls on all governing bodies of sport to develop transgender inclusion policies.

Foreign Affairs

48. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for LGBTQ+ rights to be raised in future international engagements with nations that criminalise homosexuality.
49. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the Government to use its position in the European Union and the United Nations to champion LGBTQ+ rights internationally.
50. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for opposition to any international sporting event being awarded to a nation that has been documented to be pursuing human rights abuses.
51. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the Government to work with our international partners to end the practise of sports-washing.

Housing & Local Government

52. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of dedicated LGBTQ+ homeless accommodation.
53. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the development of new data collection processes related to homeless services and the LGBTQ+ community.
54. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for training for staff of homelessness services with respect to LGBTQ+ persons.
55. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for the introduction of privacy and safety strategies for LGBTQ+ persons accessing homelessness services.
56. Fine Gael LGBTQ+ calls for changes to be made to all future censuses to include options for transgender, intersex or non-binary identifications.

Resources

1. <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/30-11-2022-who-europe-and-ecdc-report-reveals-increasing-numbers-living-with-undiagnosed-hiv-in-the-region>
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12. https://www.humandignitytrust.org/lgbt-the-law/map-of-criminalisation/?type_filter_submitted=&type_filter%5B%5D=crim_lgbt
13. https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LGBTQI-Youth-Homelessness-Report_FINAL-VERSION.pdf

Committee Members

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